

# Keeping Higher Education a Priority

By Indiana Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman

Since Governor Daniels and I assumed office more than three years ago, we have been dedicated to improving the educational opportunities for all children and adults in Indiana. We understand that in order to have a thriving workforce, we must prepare our residents with the best education possible. This is one way that we can build a stronger Indiana.

A thriving workforce is not possible if we can't keep recent college graduates here in Indiana to help build our future. Currently, 45 percent of all Indiana postsecondary graduates leave Indiana after graduating. We are working to improve that number by bringing great jobs to the state and by striving for excellence in higher education. The Governor has cut back on most state government expenditures to balance the budget, but he has approved *increased* higher education funding by approximately \$68.5 million each year.

A key component to a successful public school system is highly qualified teachers. We want Indiana to be a top choice for our nation's talent within the teaching community so we can provide the best education for our children. Because of our commitment to education, Indiana was recently selected as the lead state to launch the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship. In exchange for a three-year commitment to teach math or science in a high-need school, fellows will receive a \$30,000 stipend to complete their master's degree at Ball State University, Purdue University, University of Indianapolis, or IUPUI.

In today's globalized society, a critical part of education is exposure to foreign countries and languages. Governor Daniels and I want Hoosier students to have the opportunity to learn about the world around us. In February (2008), I led a trade mission to Mexico. Unique to this trade mission was the number of academic delegates who traveled with us. Members from four of Indiana's universities – Purdue, Indiana University, Ivy Tech and Ball State – represented their faculty and students in meetings with their counterparts at two prominent Mexican institutions. I joined the academic delegates to sign formal partnerships between their schools and La Salle University and the Autonomous University of Hidalgo, which will open the doors for future faculty and student exchanges.



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Perhaps the most important thing the Governor and I can do to keep Hoosier students here to help build a stronger Indiana is to provide them with a healthy job market. We work every day to recruit new businesses to our state and help grow those that already call Indiana home. The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), created in 2005, oversees the statewide business attraction and development efforts. Since IEDC began its work, approximately 520 businesses have committed to create more than 63,000 new, high-paying jobs in all industries. Our unemployment rate is now the lowest it's been in six years at 4.6 percent – significantly lower than our Midwestern neighbors.

Indiana is home to many great colleges and universities such as IUPUI. As state government officials, it is Governor Daniels' and my duty to support these institutions so all Hoosiers have access to a quality education. Expanding these opportunities for our citizens will strengthen our state and give graduates the tools they need to succeed in today's competitive job market. The Governor and I will continue to invest in our state's educational offerings to prepare Indiana for a bright future.